

Vegetation Management. On an average, 10-12 workers involved in this task were bitten every day by water snakes (Park Director, *pers. comm.*). There were heaps of water hyacinth lying where the cranes were foraging. It is possible that the snake was lying in wait for prey.

Water snakes are known to be pugnacious, not letting go of their prey till it dies, but not strangulating it. They are known to feed on small mammals, birds, fish and amphibians (Daniel 1992, THE BOOK OF INDIAN REPTILES). The huge

pythons *Python molurus* present in the Keoladeo marshes could be considered as potential predators of cranes. I have not come across any reference on snake-crane interaction and think it is worth recording.

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11. TWO INTERESTING AVIAN RECORDS FROM KUTCH, GUJARAT STATE

This note concerns the occurrence of *Glareola pratincola* (Linnaeus) and *Monticola cinclorhynchus* (Vigors) in Kutch. Earlier records mention the occurrence of the former, but since the nineteenth century it has not been recorded in this region. In recent years, it has been seen in 1992 (Himmatsinhji, *JBNHS* 96(2): 316-317) and 1999. The latter has been recorded for the first time and it was seen on January 27, 1985 and March 9, 1999.

While MKH and SNV watched water birds from a location on the Bhuj-Pachham road (c. 30 km north of Bhuj) on October 18, 1992, a pratincole flew in and settled down on the marsh. Soon thereafter, a juvenile bird also came down nearby. We remained there for some time, but saw no interaction between them. These individuals had deeply forked tails, and from details of the adult coloration, observed through binoculars and a telescope, appeared to be *Glareola p. pratincola*. However, we preferred to wait for a good photograph or specimen to confirm our identification in the field.

We learn that Mr. Nitin Jamdar came across this species in the Banni grasslands and in the vicinity of Chhari dhandh (*pers. comm.*). Besides this, on March 29, 1999 SNV counted 25 *G. pratincola* at Chhari dhandh.

Stuart Baker (1929) made the only mention of the collared pratincole in Kutch, but it is not

clear on what authority or evidence he did so. Dr. Ferdinand Stoliczka was the first to collect bird specimens from Kutch. Apparently, Hume also collected information on the birds of this region, and also had specimens collected through his own sources. This was followed by a study of birds by one Hugh Palin, who prepared the first edition of THE BIRDS OF KUTCH in 1878, which was revised by Capt. C.D. Lester in 1904. None of these gentlemen, nor the Sálím Ali survey of 1943-44, make any mention of the occurrence of *G. pratincola*.

Stuart Baker also refers to the occurrence and breeding of *G. p. maldivarum* in Kutch and Sind. Taking into account all the references available to us, we feel there is now less likelihood of *maldivarum* occurring in Kutch. Roberts (1991) also mentions that there are no authentic recent sightings or records of this race in Pakistan. He further states that *G. pratincola* is met with mostly in lower Sind, particularly in Badin district along the border with India in the Great Rann of Kutch, and that too as a summer breeding visitor from East Africa. Gallager (1980) describes the collared pratincole as a passage migrant in Oman, the main passage being from August-October. That is after their breeding is over.

The water regime in the northwest part of the Great Rann (directly south of Badin in Sindh,

Pakistan) has undergone some changes over the years, owing to the release of water through a *nullah* to reduce the salinity of some land under the irrigation system. Because of this, some waterbirds (including both the greater and lesser flamingos) have extended their movements to that area. The collared pratincole may also move further southwards into Kutch from there.

The second noteworthy bird-record for Kutch was of a male blueheaded rock thrush *Monticola cinclorhynchus* (Vigors) seen by SNV near Dhonsa jheel (Bhuj environs) on January 27, 1985. The second sight record of this species in Kutch was by Fakirmahamad A. Turk, at his fruit farm at Dhrab village, west of Mundra, c. 45 km south of Bhuj, on March 9, 1999. He observed the bird till March 23, 1999; took coloured photographs (it was a male) and showed them to MKH.

This bird breeds along the Himalayan

ranges and spends the winter in the Indian peninsula, but there are few records of its occurrence around Kutch. Though Dharmakumarsinhji lists it in his BIRDS OF SAURASHTRA, no specific reference is made therein to its presence in that region. Ripley (1982) mentions scarce cold weather records in southern Rajasthan and Gujarat ('including Kathiawar'). On the other hand, Roberts (1992) considers it a scarce winter visitor to Sindh. Thus, the blueheaded rock thrush is a vagrant in Kutch, not recorded before.

July 30, 1999

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Jubilee Ground

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12. OCCURRENCE OF THE CEYLON FROGMOUTH *BATRACHOSTOMUS MONILIGER* (FAMILY PODARGIDAE) IN RADHANAGARI WILDLIFE SANCTUARY, MAHARASHTRA

On November 21, 1998, I visited Radhanagari Wildlife Sanctuary, Kolhapur district, Maharashtra along with my friends. We were moving along one of the roads in the Dajipur region of the Sanctuary, leading to the core zone. The forest is of the west coast tropical evergreen and semi-evergreen type. At about 1120 hrs, we saw a large amount of bird droppings on the road, under a medium sized tree, so I thought that there may be a bird nest

or roosting place. We started looking for the bird and located it soon, perched perfectly camouflaged on a small branch about 4 to 5 m above the ground. As it was disturbed, the bird flew off and sat on another branch of the same tree. I approached the bird and was able to take a few photographs from about 2 m away. As I moved closer, the bird started moving its head like an owlet, opened its large mouth, and then flew away into the nearby jungle.